


Comments on counting young children from the Partnership for America's Children to the NAC

Deborah Stein <dstein@foramericaschildren.org>

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To: Enid Santanaortiz(CENSUS/ADDC FED) <Enid.Santanaortiz@census.gov>; Census National Advisory Committee (CENSUS) <census.national.advisory.committee@census.gov>

 2 attachments (482 KB)

2020 SUMMARY of proposal on UYC-complex households.docx; Public Comment of Deborah Stein to the Fall 2019 NAC meeting .pdf;

To the members of the National Advisory Committee:

Attached please find comments I am submitting on behalf of the Partnership for America's Children, and a summary of a proposal I refer to in the comments. I have the full proposal, if that would be helpful. I am also authorized to give you the phone number for Laurie Schwede, who was involved in the preparation of this proposal and is now retired; I'm giving it here since I don't want her phone number in the public record. 301-879-0502. She would be happy to answer questions or respond to comments.

Thank you for considering these comments.
Debbie Stein

Deborah Stein
Network Director
Partnership for America's Children
1101 14th Street NW Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
www.foramericaschildren.org
202-290-1816
Cell 202-213-8981

Overview: Comparative Statistical and Ethnographic Observation Studies on Household Complexity and the Undercount of Young Children in the 2020 Census

A 2020 Census research proposal¹

1. This proposal focuses on the interaction of complex households, race/ethnicity, and the undercount of young children (UYC) and is a follow-on to recent UYC research. The research problem: Young children aged 0-4 had the highest net undercount in the 2010 Census of all age cohorts at 4.6%, with even higher rates for young children who are Hispanic (7.5%) or black alone or in combination (6.3%) (O'Hare 2015: 34). The undercount of young children (UYC) has been growing since 1980, even as the overall count has improved; the Census Bureau has prioritized reducing this undercount in the 2020 Census. The National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations established its own subcommittee and submitted a final report in 2016 on the undercount of young children.

2. This new proposal is a direct outgrowth of recent UYC Research Team findings that areas with households at higher risk of undercounting young children might be mapped and then targeted for direct evaluation during the 2020 NRFU and PES operations (U. S. Census Bureau, 2018). This prior research documented strong statistical associations among household complexity and the undercount of young children, both overall and within race and Hispanic origin groups (Schwede, Jensen, and Griffin, 2018; Jensen, Schwede, Griffin, Konicki 2017):

- **Complex households had higher CFU young-child add rates to the 2010 Census 2010 than did noncomplex households:** about 7 added children per 1,000 total children, compared to 1 in 1000, and to the overall rate of 3 in 1000.
- **These add rates varied widely within race and Hispanic groups:** from 6 per 1,000 total non-Hispanic white children to 15 per 1,000 Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders.
- **These rates were highest for complex households: skip generation households, family households with other relatives, and family households with nonrelatives.**
- **Just three types of complex households accounted for 62% or more of all young child adds to the 2010 Census:** households that 1) included any nonrelatives; 2) included any distant relatives; or 3) were multigenerational.
- **Within each of the race and Hispanic origin groups, at least half of the added children were from these 3 complex households types:** from 50% for non-Hispanic whites to 83% for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders alone.

3. Multi-stage, mixed-methods research design:

- Targeting and selecting ethnographic sites. Select datasets (e.g., administrative records, Planning Database, ESRI Tapestry, or 5-year ACS data). Select targeting variables: including household type, race/Hispanic origin, complex household types (to the extent possible) and

¹ This proposal was first submitted to the DROM in July, 2017 by L. Schwede, K. Kephart, R. Ellis, J. Graber, and E. Jensen. It was later bundled with other proposals into an overall umbrella evaluation which was approved in 2020, "Research on Hard-to-Count Populations: Non-English speakers and Complex Households Residents Including Undercount of Children," with the primary focus on studying non-English-speaking households. That umbrella proposal will not yield much systematic information on the undercount of young children, so Schwede is recommending that the original proposal described in the text be added into the 2020 evaluation program as a stand-alone evaluation.

other factors identified in the UYC research team reports (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Select appropriate tracts that will also be in sample for the 2020 Post Enumeration Survey.²

- Ethnographic field observations, audiotaping, and ad hoc debriefings of live NRFU and PES interviews over 10 days in 10 specially selected sites at high-risk of undercoverage of young children. Careful observations and debriefings during actual census interviews give the real-time chance to answer the question of “why” young children may be missed.³
- Matching and linking of observed households and persons with CFU and later with PES households and persons to compare coverage outcomes from ethnographers to CFU and PES. This provides a triangulated perspective on how and why young children might be missed.
- Validation of targeting method. Statistical analysis of the actual 2020 census data and Coverage Improvement Operation young-child adds in the tracts included in the ethnographic study could be used to assess how well the key selection variables and the dataset used to target sites before the census predicted the actual distribution of at-risk tracts and households with young children and how accurately they were counted. Analysis of the proportion of observed households that do check the undercount probe for young children could reveal how many potential omissions there could have been and evaluate the wording and response categories of the probes.

References:

O’Hare, W. (2015). *The Undercount of Young Children in the U.S. Decennial Censuses*. Springer: New York.

Jensen, E., Schwede, L., Griffin, D., and Konicki, S. (2017). *Complex Households and the Undercount of Young Children in the 2010 Census*. Poster presented at the Population of America Annual Meeting, in Chicago, April, 2017.

Schwede, L., Jensen, E., Griffin, D. (2018). *Measuring Linkages among Household Complexity, Race/Ethnicity, and the Undercount of Young Children in Decennial Censuses*. Poster presented at the American Association for Public Opinion Research Annual Meeting in Denver, May 2018.

Schwede, L. and Terry, R. (2013). *Comparative Ethnographic Studies of Enumeration Methods and Coverage across Race and Ethnic Groups*. *2010 Census Program for Evaluations and Experiments. 2010 Census Planning Memoranda Series #255*. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau.
www.census.gov/2010census/pdf/comparative_ethnographic_studies_of Enumeration_methods_and_coverage_across_race_and_ethnic_groups.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau (2018). *Investigating the 2010 Undercount of Young Children – Analysis of Complex Households*, December 4, 2018. Available at: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-2010-undercount-children-complex_households.pdf

² Researchers were given special DSSD approval to select 2010 Census Coverage Measurement Operation sample clusters to select ethnographic observation sites (Schwede and Terry, 2013).

³ These methods were used in the 2010 evaluation, “Comparative Ethnographic Studies of Enumeration Methods and Coverage across Race/Ethnic Groups” (Schwede and Terry, 2013).

U.S. Census Bureau (2019). Investigating the 2010 Undercount of Young Children – Summary of Recent Research. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-2010-undercount-children-summary-recent-research.pdf>